



SACRAMENTO RIVER COUNCIL

P.O. Box 992450, Redding, CA 96099-2450 (916) 244-3049

250 Overhill Dr.

Redding, CA 96001; 916/244-0817, fax 0831

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SENT BY FAX & MAIL

Mr. Roger Patterson
Mid-Pacific Regional Director
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, California 95825

Dear Mr. Patterson:

This letter transmits the comments of the Sacramento River Council on the bureau's draft environmental assessment of the Red Bluff diversion dam pilot pumping plant program. We continue to strongly support the only acceptable alternative for fish passage at Red Bluff diversion dam -- the full-size pumping plant. Consequently, we also strongly support the pilot pumping plant program.

Our greatest concern with the EA is the estimated start date for operation of the pilot project. Given the ongoing deleterious impacts of dam operations on the salmon fishery and the requirements of Public Law 102-575 (H.R. 429), we recommend this project be "fast tracked" to move the start date up as far as possible from October, 1993. This would also help to accelerate completion of the final project before the current target date of 1998. At that rate, the first outmigrating salmon to benefit from the project would not return to spawn until 2001! As Congressman Vic Fazio asked in reference to the full project, "What opportunities exist for shortening the construction schedule?"

The summary on page 2 of the document states that "Without implementation of this program ... a further decline in (the winter run) may occur and recovery may be inhibited." We suggest stronger language, such as "Without implementation of this program ... a further decline and extinction of the winter run is almost certain to occur." One need only look at the synchronization between the decline of the winter run and the start of Red Bluff dam operations to judge how much longer the species can survive with the gates down.

On page 10, we are glad you recognize that "The construction of the pilot pumping plant would allow Reclamation to meet (the) ESA requirements while still allowing the basic project purpose to proceed." After the bureau successfully completes the pilot project and commits to providing pumping power at project cost, we are sure our friends who are served by the Tehama-Colusa and Corning canals will also support the full project.

We were also pleased to read on page 26 of the EA that the bureau recognizes that "... RBDD reduced the opportunity for recreational fishing in the Sacramento River at (Lake Red Bluff) and further upstream."

There are those in Red Bluff who seem to have forgotten the \$4 million that salmon fishing brought annually into Tehama County not long ago, far more in the estimation of regional tourism experts than is brought in by Lake Red Bluff. Fortunately, this income can be brought back to Tehama County along with the salmon after we fix Red Bluff dam, as well as the Delta pumps and the temperature problems in the spawning stretch.

On this last issue, we appreciate your forthrightness in admitting that the water temperatures created by CVP operations at Red Bluff "violate State water quality standards or objectives." For this reason we cannot agree with the preceding statement on page 26 that "The water quality of the Sacramento River at RBDD is good." As pointed out on page 5 of the Fish and Wildlife Service's cogent comments on the draft EA, however, "Elimination of Lake Red Bluff is expected to result in as much as 1.0 degree Fahrenheit cooler water in the river within the lake reach and downstream of Red Bluff Diversion Dam, and may provide some additional temperature protection (and habitat) for salmon spawning in and below the lake reach." This would be a positive development indeed as it would allow the bureau to deliver more water to CVP contractors while still meeting the legally required basin plan temperature standard from April 15 through November at Red Bluff diversion dam.

We request a written response to these comments. Thank you for taking our views into consideration as you move rapidly forward with this desperately needed project. For further information please contact our consultant, Tryg Sletteland as shown beneath our letterhead.

Sincerely,



DONALD M. DEMSHER
President and Chairman of the Board

cc: Congressmen Vic Fazio and George Miller
Tony Azevedo, Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority
Winnifred Jones, Corning Water District
John Reginato, Shasta Cascade regional tourism consultant
Chuck DeJournette, Sacramento River Council/Tehama Flyfishers
Shel Meyer, NorCal Guides and Sportsmen's Assn./CV Fisheries Coalition
Zeke Grader, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Assns.
John Merz, Sacramento River Preservation Trust
Jud Ellinwood, CA Salmon, Steelhead & Trout Restoration Federation.

P.S. When you respond to our comments, please also explain why a representative of the Sacramento River Council was not invited to the upcoming small group meeting to evaluate alternatives. As a very active leader of the campaign for the pumping plant over the past several years, we are curious why SRC was excluded from the negotiations. We are also concerned about the inclusion of Bob Bosworth, who represents neither the people of Shasta County nor any other organized interest in this matter. Given these and other considerations, the cost of a three day, consultant-led "process" which attempts to reach complete consensus on an acceptable alternative may not be justified.